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News Release



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New Firearms Rules in Effect on Units of The Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex

LAS VEGAS -- On February 22, 2010, the U.S. Department of the Interior instituted new rules governing possession of firearms on national wildlife refuges (NWR) and national parks. As a result of legislation enacted by Congress, individuals are allowed to lawfully possess firearms within the boundaries of national wildlife refuges in accordance with federal, state and local firearms laws.

The new law applies to all 551 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including the four units comprising the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Desert Complex) in southern Nevada; the Ash Meadows NWR in Amargosa Valley, the Desert NWR north of Las Vegas, the Moapa Valley NWR near Moapa, and the Pahrnagat NWR south of Alamo. Visitors, including those with "carry permits," may possess firearms on Desert Complex wildlife refuges, provided they are in compliance with Nevada state and local laws and federal firearms regulations.

Prior to the new regulations, only licensed hunters could carry firearms on Desert Complex wildlife refuges during state sanctioned hunting seasons. The new regulations will not affect hunting on Desert Complex units. Hunting will continue on the Ash Meadows NWR and the Pahrnagat NWR. Limited state-sanctioned hunting for Bighorn sheep will also continue on the Desert NWR.

"We want to make sure visitors to our wildlife refuges are fully aware of what the new law covers," said Cynthia Martinez, manager of the Desert Complex. "It is important to note that the law does not change or expand hunting opportunities on national wildlife refuges, nor does it exempt hunters from state or federal hunting regulations."

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While the new regulations change rules for possession of firearms, they have no impact on the authorized uses of firearms on wildlife refuges. With the exception of legal hunting, the law does not allow visitors to fire or discharge a firearm, brandish a weapon in the view of others, or use the firearm for any other purpose.

Firearms are prohibited in federal facilities such as NWR visitor centers, administrative office buildings, maintenance offices and workshops, field and backcountry offices, ranger stations and fee collection stations. The Department of the Interior retains authority for enforcement of regulations pertaining to firearms use on NWRs.

Visitors wishing to take firearms onto any Desert Complex wildlife refuge should carefully read and understand the laws of the State of Nevada, as well as applicable local and county laws and ordinances. The laws of the states in which persons reside, or from which they may have received firearm permits, do not apply when they are away from those states, although some states allow firearm possession based on another state's permits.

Hunters on wildlife refuges must possess the required state license(s), as well as any permits and/or user fees. For additional information about hunting on refuges within the Desert Complex, please visit **www.fws.gov/desertcomplex/**.

The law does not differentiate between concealed handguns under state permit and long guns (rifles, shotguns, muzzleloaders). It applies to all firearms, which are defined as weapons designed to fire a projectile by the use of an explosive charge. All federal firearms statutes remain unchanged.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit **www.fws.gov**.